Democrats Pick Up the Global Digital ID Agenda in Project 2029

A bid to end online anonymity under the premise of child safety.

By **Christina Maas** June 30, 2026 4 min read + Subscribe Share

Stand against censorship and surveillance: join Reclaim The Net

A group of operatives gathers every few years to write the document that will supposedly save the party, and this season's entry comes from Project 2029, a "liberal" outfit built as the mirror image of the conservative Project 2025.

One side wrote a blueprint that ended up staffing part of a presidential administration. The other would like the same result, but opens with the safest subject in American politics, the welfare of children.

What it has actually picked up is a global digital ID agenda, a policy spreading through Australia, Britain, and the European Union, the

government-backed age check, increasingly a digital ID, that decides who gets onto a platform.

As first reported by Semafor, Project 2029 wants to make it the opening pitch of the next Democratic campaign, sold under the same banner every other global elite is using, child protection.

The first product off the line is called “Kids Over Clicks.” It would ban social media accounts for anyone under 16, trim the liability shield in Section 230, cap data collection on minors, and outlaw the targeted ads that follow them around the web.

The group’s executive director, Chad Maisel, a former adviser to Joe Biden and Cory Booker, frames the rollout as a contest of nerve. “We’re going to see many people running for president…and we want to set the standard in terms of the type of ambition that we want to see when it comes to solving these problems,” he said.

The pitch arrives wrapped in the language of a public-health crusade. Project 2029 calls this the “tobacco moment” for social media, and the psychologist Jonathan Haidt, one of its boosters, supplies the closing argument. “We are at the ‘tobacco moment’ for social media. The science is in, the lawsuits are succeeding, and public support is overwhelming. This agenda gives policymakers no excuse not to act,” he said.

It’s a clean story, complete with a villain and a rescue. It also runs on something its authors rarely say out loud.

To keep children off a platform, somebody has to check the age of everyone who shows up. At the scale of a national social network, there is no gentle way to do that. You confirm identity. A birth year typed into a box proves nothing, so the check hardens into a government ID, a face scan, or a digital credential tied to a real person.

The under-16 rule, sold as a wall around children, becomes a turnstile that adults have to badge through too. The framework keeps this in the footnotes. Once a platform must verify ages, the anonymous account stops being possible, and the pseudonymous handle that lets someone speak without surrendering a legal name turns into a verified record, logged and stored, waiting for the next breach or subpoena.

Not all of Kids Over Clicks pulls in that direction. Banning surveillance ads and capping data collection on minors would shrink what companies hoard, the rare provisions that take something from the platforms rather than from the user. The age gate sits awkwardly beside them, demanding the one thing the rest of the document is trying to protect, a person's identity.

The countries already running it offer a preview, and not all of them are democracies. Australia switched on its under-16 ban in December 2025.

Britain's Online Safety Act now greets users of Reddit and X with a demand for a passport or a face scan before they reach ordinary content, a regime broad enough that the Wikimedia Foundation went to court arguing it could force identity checks onto the people who edit Wikipedia.

The European Union is folding age verification into a continent-wide Digital Identity Wallet. The United Arab Emirates bars under-15s outright and requires digital identity checks to enforce it. Saudi Arabia, which already runs one of the most heavily policed internets on earth, shows where the road ends, in a country where the link between a citizen and every word they post is permanent and state-held.

That is the recurring shape of age verification as a genre. It is sold on its effect on children and judged, eventually, on its effect on everyone else.

The bet is that no candidate will want to be filmed arguing against

winning it is a Democratic Party that runs, in 2028, on the same instrument Britain, Brussels, Abu Dhabi, and Riyadh are each building for their own reasons, a standing check on who gets to speak without a name. Australia has already shown how the story goes. The kids find the workaround but the ID requirement stays.

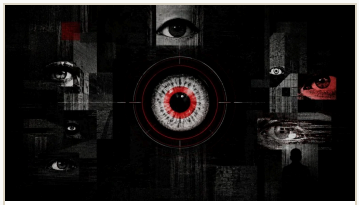
Stand against censorship and surveillance: join Reclaim The Net

Reclaim The Net is reader-supported. Every contribution widens the reach, helping more people see the threat to privacy and free expression, and push back.

MAKE A DONATION

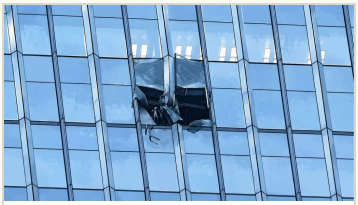
or become a subscriber →

MORE FROM RECLAIM THE NET



The KIDS Act's Next Stop Is the Senate. Make Your Voice Count.

Jul 1



The Memory Hole Above Beijing

Jul 1

Reddit to Require Login for Old Reddit, Curbing Anonymous Browsing

Jul 1

© 2026 Reclaim The Net Privacy